



## 2011 Candidate Questionnaire: Transportation and Land Use Policy

### **Organizational Overview:**

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more efficient, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Since the mid-nineties, the Campaign has played a critical watchdog role in the field of transportation policy, helping state transportation agencies reform their approach to solving transportation problems. Our work has increased funding for infrastructure maintenance and repair, created more effective road projects and led to millions of dollars in new funding for walking, cycling and mass transit projects.

### **Purpose and Process:**

Transportation policies directly impact Long Island's citizens in a variety of ways. Elected officials influence the development of these policies and how certain transportation systems are funded and built, thereby impacting constituents' daily lives. This short questionnaire will be used to inform the public on the incumbents' or candidates' positions in key areas of transportation policy. The questionnaire will provide you with an opportunity to present your views and vision on how to address the transportation issues facing Long Islanders at the state and local levels. Please be as detailed as possible when describing your positions. **The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-partisan organization that neither supports nor opposes any political party or candidate for office.**

Questionnaire responses, however, will be posted on our blog at [blog.tstc.org](http://blog.tstc.org) and in our newsletter, *Mobilizing the Region*.

**In order for ample time to distribute the results of the questionnaire to the voting public, please return the completed questionnaire to Ryan Lynch, [rlynch@tstc.org](mailto:rlynch@tstc.org), or 350 West 31<sup>st</sup> Street, Suite 802, NY, NY 10001, no later than October 7, 2011.**

**Candidate/Elected Official's Name:** Eva Pearson

**District Represented:** Nassau County Legislature, district 14

**Primary Contact and Title:** Graham Long, campaign manager  
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1. Please provide a brief overview of transportation initiatives that you have undertaken, or will undertake, as a Nassau County Legislator. If applicable, please list specific legislation, policies, or programs:

- Support implementation of complete streets law
- LIRR Main line 3<sup>rd</sup> track
- Ronkonkoma branch second track
- Coordinated Traffic signal progression (Hempstead turnpike/Conklin/109)
- Specific district-wide pedestrian safety improvements
- Supports long-term planning for express/bus rapid transit for Nassau, and/or county-wide light rail

2. Public transportation service is an integral component of Nassau County's economic strength and environmental well being. According to *Newsday*' reports and the MTA<sup>ii</sup>, ridership on the Long Island Rail Road has increased by approximately .02% from 2005 to 2010, although ridership over 2009 is down as a result of the weak economy. According to the LI Index<sup>iii</sup>, ridership on LI Bus increased by approximately 3.5% from 2000-2009, although ridership is down 6% over 2008 numbers because of the lagging economy. **Given these trends, how would you address increased ridership on public transportation across Long Island?**

Given that:

- We have a high-level of transit ridership to begin with, compared to national statistics for similar suburban areas
- A stagnant, near 70% share of drive-alone commuters in ACS and Census journey-to-work data
- Automobile-dependent areas in which residents need their vehicle for almost every trip they take
- A statistically proven positive relationship between increased economic activity and public transit ridership

Therefore, we have the necessary critical mass to support an expanded and improved public transportation network. Ridership on public transit is about convenience, cost, frequency of departures, and duration of trip. All of these must be improved to reach the point where it is more desirable to use public transportation for many trips than it is to drive alone. That requires investment, which will pay off through increased economic activity, increased transit revenues, and decreased traffic and congestion.

3. The economic costs of traffic congestion in the New York metropolitan region was nearly \$11 million in 2009, and the cost to auto drivers was almost a \$1,000 per person over the same time period<sup>iv</sup>. **What measures and/or projects would you promote to reduce congestion on Nassau County's roadways?**

- Investment in public transit network
- Coordinated Traffic signal progression
- Complete streets law implementation
- Transit-oriented development and the zoning to support it
- Targeted growth areas for future development, that are established in guidelines by the county with the support of state and local agencies, implemented through inter-municipal agreements when necessary

4. According to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System<sup>v</sup>, which is maintained by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 86 pedestrians were killed in Nassau County from 2007-2009. In addition, a Tri-State analysis found that 11 cyclists were killed over this same time period, the second highest number of fatalities outside of NYC. **In light of these statistics, what measures would you propose to reduce these preventable fatalities on Nassau County roads?**

The best way to reduce fatalities is to reduce the speed at which traffic moves, and narrow the width of crosswalks. Complete streets law implementation helps with both.

5. Do you support development near transit stations or in the downtown area of your town or village? Why or why not?

We want responsible development in downtown Farmingdale, near the LIRR station. The village is a destination place, and while development needs to be fitting for the character of Farmingdale as a smaller village, the downtown needs more residents to support local businesses and expand the tax base. Farmingdale is already a traditional transit-oriented downtown, and it should have more residents living in and near the downtown to create vibrancy and economic activity.

6. Finally, please tell us whether you support or oppose the following transportation projects or policies:

*Privatization of Long Island Bus*

**Oppose**

*LIRR East Side Access connection to Grand Central Terminal*

**Support** – This project is within a few years of completion and will help create an incentive for people to move to transit-oriented areas like downtown Farmingdale, give commuters a second option for commuting to Manhattan, and reduce crowding at Penn Station.

*Third Track on the LIRR Main Line*

**Support** – This has been proposed to be built (and much of the right-of-way acquired) since before the Great Depression. It is necessary to meet increased demand (partly in connection to the East Side Access project). It will help reduce commuters' travel times, and prevent congestion-related delays. The argument against it, that it will increase freight traffic, is actually a good thing, as that will get more trucks off of our local roads. However, it will not have an effect on increasing freight traffic, as the New York & Atlantic short-line freight service runs most of its freight trains on off-peak times where capacity is not an issue.

Two lanes of rail on the Main Line is roughly equivalent to a 16-lane highway in passenger capacity. To increase economic activity, would it make any sense to add 16 more lanes to the 8-lane LIE?

*Intermodal Truck to Rail center at Pilgrim State Hospital site*

**Support** – It gets container trucks off our local roads, especially those traveling through Nassau to get to Suffolk.

*Mixed-Use Development Project at the Nassau HUB*

**Support-** However it needs more study, and we MUST invest in the proper transportation and other infrastructure to support it if it is going to succeed.

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<sup>i</sup> “Ridership Drops in Weak Economy,” *Newsday*, 1/27/2010, Alfonso Castillo.

<sup>ii</sup> “Metropolitan Transportation Authority Annual Report Narrative 2010,” page 5, Operations Section, MTA.

<sup>iii</sup> Long Island Index, Transportation Indicators, <http://www.longislandindex.org/Transit-Ridership.693.0.html>

<sup>iv</sup> 2010 Urban Mobility Report, Texas Transportation Institute, [http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/congestion\\_data/tables/newyo.pdf](http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/congestion_data/tables/newyo.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Fatality Analysis Reporting System, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, <http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/States/StatesPedestrians.aspx>